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Cuba and CIA

There is an atmosphere of mystery and confusion in the government today over what went wrong with the ill-fated Cuban invasion last week. The Central Intelligence Agency is in the thick of it. The difficulty of a democratic government's conducting clandestine operations is pointed up in the CIA-Cuba story.

The study of U. S. para-military activities ordered by President Kennedy Apr. 22 is to be government-wide, but obviously it will bear down on the CIA role in support of the anti-Castro forces.

On the sensitive study group are Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, former Army chief of staff; Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, chief of Naval operations; CIA Director Allen W. Dulles, and the President's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

Appointment of this group may well have the effect of forestalling the proposal made by Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) five years ago and renewed after the U-2 incident of last year that a permanent joint committee be established to make continuing studies of the agency.

Congress has every right to investigate CIA. Congress established the agency in 1947; Congress votes its funds (though only a few members know what they're voting for); Congress in 1949 greatly extended CIA's authority.

But the CIA Act of 1949 specifically exempts the cloak-and-dagger agency from the provisions of any law requiring publication or disclosure of the "organization, functions, names, official titles, salaries, or numbers of personnel employees."

This kind of freedom from public scrutiny has given CIA both its strength and its occasional weaknesses. In this respect the special study group ordered by the President, on balance, would seem to be better able to investigate the agency without airing its secrets than a congressional committee would be.